

Town of Odessa

Minutes of the TREE COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Old Academy Building

315 Main Street, Odessa, DE 19730

In Person

Call to Order

Chairwoman Melaine Minear called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Commission members Michael Callaghan, Melaine Minear and Quentin Schlieder were present. Neeka Grove recently resigned and Jeff Pyle was absent. A quorum was present.

Consideration of Minutes from the January 10, 2023 Meeting

Chairwoman Melaine Minear inquired if there were any additions or corrections to the Minutes of January 10, 2023. There being none, she entertained a motion to approve these Minutes. Commissioner Michael Callaghan moved to approve the Minutes of the January 10, 2023 meeting. Secretary Quentin Schlieder seconded the motion which was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Recognition of Visitors

No visitors attended the meeting.

Old Business

February 6, 2023 presentation to the Odessa Mayor and Council

Chairwoman Minear, Commissioner Callaghan and Secretary Schlieder attended the February 6, 2022 Odessa Council meeting. Secretary Schlieder presented the 2022 Annual Report, the 2022-2024 proposed Tree Commission Master Plan, copies of the brochures and posters produced by the Tree Commission to date and the proposed 2023 Annual Budget. A copy of the presentation packet was circulated and copies of the Annual Report were provided to each Commissioner. Favorable feedback on the presentation was received from Mayor Smith and Councilman Aguilar.

2023 Delaware Urban and Community Forestry Grant Proposal

Submission of a grant application is being deferred pending clarification of several issues. A meeting with Taryn Davidson of the Delaware Forest Service is scheduled for Thursday, February 23, 2023. Chairwoman Minear and Secretary Schlieder will meet with Ms. Davidson.

Secretary Schlieder noted that during his tenure with the Smyrna Shade Tree Commission, he learned that if a community received a grant this year, it was unlikely that it would receive one the following year since the Delaware Community Forestry Council endeavors to distribute the limited funds equitably across the state. Additionally, preference is given to Tree City USA communities, and it is uncertain if Odessa has been granted this designation at this time. He also noted that additional information was needed to determine if an autumn planting project would be possible, which would be preferable since it would greatly reduce the labor required to water the new trees. He also noted that the inventory will provide valuable information on where plants could be best situated, and an education initiative to adjacent property owners would hopefully avoid any conflicts. All this, of course will take time. He stated that a much stronger application could be submitted next year. The Commission concurred.

Bids for the Safety Pruning at Memorial Park

Secretary Schlieder distributed the draft bid document soliciting proposals for tree work at Memorial Park. The document has been reviewed by Mayor Smith who had approved it. Comments were solicited from members of the Tree Commission. Bids will be solicited in March, after the threat of ice storms has passed, to assure that the funds are not needed for other emergency work. The bids will remain effective through June 30, 2023.

One concern that has come to Chairwoman Minear's attention after reviewing New Castle County Tax Parcel maps, is that at least one of the trees may actually be located on the adjacent Odessa Ventures parcel. She has searched for a survey at Town Hall, but none has been found. Commissioner Callaghan, using his laptop, attempted to clarify the matter, but it appears that a field check to locate the monument near West Main Street would be prudent. Chairwoman Minear and Secretary Schlieder will field check the location of the tree. Commissioner Callaghan commented that Ordinance No. 2002-1 provides the authority to direct the removal of the tree if it is located on the Odessa Ventures property.

Additionally, Chairwoman Minear noted that she encountered consulting planners from a private firm who were performing field work for the proposed biking improvements and she inquired about the parking lot at Memorial Park. They referred her to Cooper Bowers of the Delaware Department of Transportation. She subsequently contacted him and inquired about assistance in improving parking, and perhaps addressing the pruning issues of many of the deteriorating and dead trees. After consulting the New Castle County Parcel site, he suggested that many of the trees in question appear to be on the Odessa Ventures parcel. More information will be provided when available.

Finally, Chairwoman Minear suggested that an invasive plant control project be initiated as an Earth Day Activity. Earth Day will be celebrated nationwide on Saturday April 22, 2023. Since time is short, on the motion of Secretary Schlieder which was duly seconded by Commissioner Callaghan and approved unanimously by voice vote, the Tree Commission recommended proceeding with planning for the event. A more detail proposal will be presented at the Tree Commission's March 14th, 2023 meeting.

Tree City USA Application Status

The disposition of the Odessa Tree Commission's Tree City USA application will be discussed with Taryn Davidson of the Delaware Forest Service at the meeting on February 23, 2023.

Dogwoods on Main Street Near Post Office

Secretary Schlieder provided information of the proper pruning of the dogwoods next to the Post Office to Carol Sheats who was planning to present the information to the property owner. The Commission is awaiting a response.

Facebook Page

Quentin Schlieder volunteered to initiate a Facebook page titled "Odessa, Delaware Tree Log" to promote the Tree Commission and its work as proposed in the Commission's Master Plan. Commissioner Michael Callaghan moved to authorize Secretary Schlieder to proceed with the initiative. The motion was seconded by Secretary Schlieder and was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Arbor Day Celebration

In accordance with the Tree Commission's 2022-2024 Master Plan the Commission reviewed the following details for the 2023 celebration of Arbor Day:

- Date – Sunday April 30, 2023 at noon following the service at nearby St. Paul's UME Church which has a traditional 11:00 a.m. service.
- Venue – Main Street in front of State Police Barracks
- Dedication -150th Anniversary of the Town's Charter

- Program
 - Welcome and introduction of Town officials and other dignitaries - Mayor Harvey Smith has accepted if re-elected.
 - Reading of Resolution and Introduction of Commission Commissioners - Melaine Minear, Chair, Odessa Tree Commission
 - Blessing - Pastor Linda Ray, Saint Paul's UME Church – Chairwoman Melaine Minear will ask Jeff Pyle to contact Pastor Ray and to confirm her participation in the ceremony.
 - Tree Planting of a White Oak dedicated to the 150th Anniversary of the Town's Charter – Secretary Schlieder will provide the tree, a marker and will demonstrate proper planting of a tree.
 - Recognition of Heritage Tree - Presentation of certificate to John Goodier for his thoughtful stewardship of one of the State's largest Tulip Poplar Trees. Chairwoman Melaine Minear will invite Mr. Goodier to attend the ceremony. Secretary Schlieder will provide the certificate and presentation folder.
 - Thank those attending - Mayor Smith has accepted if re-elected.
 - Refreshments - Chairwoman Melaine Minear will ask Commissioner Pyle to inquire if the Woman's Club would provide refreshments as they have done in the past. Secretary Schlieder volunteered to provide refreshments if the Woman's Club declines.
 - Distribution of tree seedlings to those attending. Quentin Schlieder is trying to obtain seedlings of Sweet Bay Magnolia or Kousa Dogwood, which because of their small stature can be accommodated in many gardens. Chairwoman Minear inquired how many plants would be needed. Secretary Schlieder advised that he plans on acquiring 50 plants for distribution.

Halfway to Arbor Day Party

Chairwoman Minear and Secretary Schlieder will try to meet with Carla Pyle to seek her guidance on forming a Committee for the Half Way to Arbor Day fundraising event.

Inventory and Mapping – Michael Callaghan

Commissioner Michael Callaghan has been in contact with the Geography Department at the University of Delaware concerning the mapping of Street Trees. He has contacts within the Department since his mother was employed there.

There are several approaches to the mapping with different platforms. The first is the ARC GIS mapping system. The basic program would cost \$100.00 annually. He is seeking a cloud-based application with real time data. He estimated that this program would cut the time to perform the inventory in half. New Castle County and the Towns of Middletown and Smyrna use this system. He hopes that graduate student assistance might be available for this project.

Another option would be Google Earth™ or Google Earth Pro™. He will do further due diligence to prepare a recommendation. It was noted that there is no particular rush, since Secretary Schlieder can begin the card inventory once the trees break dormancy and are in leaf.

Status of New Castle County UDC – Chapter 40, Article 23

While the Town appears to be in general agreement with many of the requirements of Chapter 40, Article 23 of the New Castle County UDC, Secretary Ottinger has requested that the Commission prepare a proposal in the format of the Town's Ordinance to be considered by the Mayor and Council. Secretary Schlieder will try to prepare a proposal for consideration by the Commission as soon as possible, however, due to other matters, it will probably be after Arbor Day.

New Business

Volunteers

Commissioner Callaghan was a former Eagle Scout and camp counselor and is familiar with the scouting activity in the greater Odessa area. He noted that there are troops which meet at St. Paul's in Odessa and St. Joseph's in Middletown. After brief discussion it was recommended that the Chairwoman would be the appropriate person to make initial contact with these troops so that they are aware of opportunities to earn badges related to the Tree Commission's activities.

Commissioner Callaghan noted that there is a Natural Resources option offered at Odessa High School through the Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources. From the information posted on the school's website, it appears that Jeff Billings is the appropriate contact. Again, it was recommended that Chairwoman Minear would be the appropriate contact representative from the Commission, although Secretary Schlieder offered to accompany her.

There are other nonprofit community organizations in the area who also might be willing to offer volunteer assistance. Commissioners were encouraged to research these opportunities and offer suggestions at the next meeting.

Other Business

Commissioner Callaghan reported that he had researched possible sources of water for new plantings at the Odessa Memorial Park. He reported that there is a partially abandoned well located on the adjacent property owned by Lacy Holly. However, more promising is a well that was dug on the park property located near a maintenance shed at the end of Diemler Street. While the water is not appropriate for public consumption is foul smelling due to an elevated level of sulfur, it should be fine for irrigating new plantings. He recalled that the Town had invested about \$1,200.00 around March 17, 2005 and information should be included in the minutes for the Park Commission meetings, since the Park Commission was active back then. Chairwoman Minear will consult with Town Secretary Amy Ottinger and will attempt to find a binder containing information of the proceedings of the Park Commission. She also will discuss this matter with Mayor Smith.

Next Meeting Date and Time

Chairwoman Minear reminded the Commission that the next meeting of the Odessa Tree Commission will be held on Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at Town Hall.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairwoman Melaine Minear adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m. on the motion of Commissioner Michael Callaghan which was duly seconded by secretary Quentin Schlieder and adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted

Quentin C. Schlieder Jr.
Secretary